

List Release Training: Session Three

Making the Pitch

On March 21, 2006, Best Workplaces for CommutersSM continued its 2006 list release training series by providing tips on engaging potential employers. Robin Snyder, an EPA Best Workplaces for Commuters team member, provided opening remarks and introduced the featured participant.

Featured Participants

Robin Snyder, U.S. EPA

Ms. Snyder's presentation is available in PowerPoint format at www.bwc.gov/presentations/powerpoint.htm. A summary of Ms. Snyder's key points follows:

- In addition to the four standard primary benefits, EPA also allows employers to apply by submitting an employer proposal. EPA encourages employer proposals in order to allow potential Best Workplaces for Commuters employers' flexibility and an opportunity to gain recognition for implementing innovative commuter benefits. However, employer proposals must meet the national standard of excellence, including a 14 percent reduction of single occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips. EPA evaluates an employer's entire commuter benefits program prior to approving a proposal. Ms. Snyder suggested that Network members review and cite examples of approved employer proposals when speaking to perspective Best Workplaces for Commuters employers who might not offer one of the other primary benefits.

- Ms. Snyder stressed the importance of verifying the quality of each employer proposal to preserve Best Workplaces for Commuters' high level of distinction. Ms. Snyder recommended emphasizing that being one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters sets employers apart from their competitors.
- Employers can and should use the Best Workplaces for Commuters logo in their job ads and on their Web sites. EPA has CDs with electronic materials for logo use, including screen shots of real Web sites showcasing the logo and PDFs with references to participation in Best Workplaces for Commuters. Ms. Snyder pointed out that such examples are useful to show potential employers how current Best Workplaces for Commuters use the designation to set themselves apart from their peers. Ms. Snyder asked that participants contact her to request the CD.

Shannon Morris, Executive Director, North Texas Clean Air Coalition

Ms. Morris led the list releases in North Texas for the past three years. She co-presented and shared her experiences and lessons learned from her efforts in North Texas. A summary of Ms. Morris's key points and examples follows:

- Building and maintaining relationships with transit agencies and potential Best Workplaces for Commuters is vitally important for promoting the list. Ms. Morris remarked that the North Texas Clean Air Coalition has close relationships



with three North Texas transit agencies. These relationships are beneficial because the agencies can provide information on which local employers provide commuter benefits.

- Ms. Morris noted that personal contact is the most important form of outreach. She explained that the majority of Best Workplaces for Commuters applications are the result of direct calls. Mailings, both electronic and “snail” mail, are important for Best Workplaces for Commuters brand awareness. Prior to the 2006 North Texas list release, the coalition plans to send postcards to potential employers in their database to increase awareness.
- Public visibility and recognition are important motivators for potential Best Workplaces for Commuters employers. Ms. Morris suggested that companies in regulated industries value recognition from EPA and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The complete North Texas list is published in area newspapers.
- The North Texas Clean Air Coalition is comprised of both private and public sector organizations. However, the North Texas region’s chambers of commerce make up a large portion of the coalition. The coalition is structured such that different chambers of commerce direct outreach only for employers in their area. North Texas transit agencies are also involved in the list release effort because they share the goal of increasing commuter options.
- Transit agencies cannot provide information on employers that provide telework as part of their commuter benefits program. However, the North Texas Clean Air Coalition has been surveying employees about telework opportunities since 1993 in order to recognize employers who do offer telework options.
- Ms. Morris recommended including employers of all sizes in list releases. Large employers are more likely to offer more commuter benefits but it is important to also recognize small businesses so all employers understand that they can offer commuter benefits regardless of their size. The North Texas list release encompasses a broad spectrum of employers and does not limit itself to large or small employers.
- A major barrier to becoming one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters is simply filling out the application. BWC Network members can fill out applications for potential Best Workplaces for Commuters employers. Ms. Morris recommended being persistent with perspective employers. She suggested keeping hard-copy applications on hand to give to and complete with potential employers. Hard-copy applications allow prospective employers to gather all of their data before applying online.
- Ms. Morris shared her lessons learned over the past three years. She explained that although the list releases are challenging, she has seen her efforts pay off. She shared an anecdotal account from a North Texas transit company about employers specifying that they will maintain their commuter benefit programs in order to keep their Best Workplaces for Commuters designation.

Closing

Ms. Snyder thanked Shannon Morris for sharing her experiences and perspective in preparing for a list release. She also thanked the participants for joining the call and added that the last of the four-part list release training series will be held on March 28, 2006, and summaries will be available at www.bwc.gov.

